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U.S. Military Industrial Complex Is 'Choking Democracy' — How Do We Stop It?

America's founders were profoundly skeptical of large militaries, of entangling alliances with foreign powers and of permanent wars, according to Bill Astore, a "card-carrying member" of the military-industrial complex, who warns: "So should we all be."

By TomDispatch

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By William Astore

My name is Bill Astore and I'm a card-carrying member of the military-industrial complex, or MIC.

Sure, I hung up my military uniform for the last time in 2005. Since 2007, I've been writing articles for TomDispatch focused largely on critiquing that same MIC and America's permanent war economy.

I've written against this country's wasteful and unwise wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, its costly and disastrous weapons systems and its undemocratic embrace of warriors and militarism.

Nevertheless, I remain a lieutenant colonel, if a retired one. I still have my military ID card, if only to get on bases, and I still tend to say "we" when I talk about my fellow soldiers, Marines, sailors and airmen (and our "guardians," too, now that we have a Space Force).

So, when I talk to organizations that are antiwar, that seek to downsize, dismantle, or otherwise weaken the MIC, I'm upfront about my military biases even as I add my own voice to their critiques.

Of course, you don't have to be antiwar to be highly suspicious of the U.S. military.

Senior leaders in "my" military have lied so often, whether in the Vietnam War era of the last century or in this one about "progress" in Iraq and Afghanistan, that you'd have to be asleep at the wheel or ignorant not to have suspected the official story.

Yet I also urge antiwar forces to see more than mendacity or malice in "our" military.

It was retired general and then-President Dwight D. Eisenhower, after all, who first warned Americans of the profound dangers of the military-industrial complex in his 1961 farewell address.

Not enough Americans heeded Eisenhower's warning then and, judging by our near-constant